

Below are a few links to stories about yesterday's hearing conducted by the House Judiciary Committee on Congressman Pence's federal media shield bill:

[AP Story](#)

[WTHR](#) (Indianapolis)

[San Francisco Chronicle](#)

[CBS News Blog](#)

And here are excerpts from today's *Columbus Republic* :

By Kirk Johannesen

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., urged members of House Judiciary Committee on Thursday to support a federal media shield law to protect the public's right to know.

Pence and U.S. Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Va., are the lead sponsors of House Resolution 2102, Free Flow of Information Act of 2007.

The bill was written in the 109th Congress and reintroduced in the 110th. Its purpose is to maintain a free flow of information to the public by providing conditions for the federally compelled disclosure of information by certain persons connected with the news media.

The bill awaits a vote in the committee to see if it is passed to the House floor for a vote.

Pence hopes the bill will pass in the House before the August recess.

Whistle-blower need

Pence said he and Boucher were encouraged by the reception the bill received from committee members during the three-hour hearing.

"We both left feeling like they had moved the legislation forward. We did not hear from any members of Congress, that participated, any unilateral opposition," Pence said.

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Pence told the committee that if W. Mark Felt had not received assurances of confidentiality, he would not have revealed government abuses that became known as the Watergate scandal.

Pence told the committee that 32 states and District of Columbia have statutes that protect reporters from testifying or revealing their information in court. There is no federal law guaranteeing such protections.

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Former New York Times columnist William Safire testified at the hearing. Pence said he described an atmosphere of "coercive chilling."

Safire said colleagues who have received subpoenas or have faced jail time for not revealing sources are now less inclined to assure confidentiality to sources in exchange for information.

Pence noted that in July 2005, New York Times reporter Judith Miller was jailed for contempt

of court for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury that was investigating a leak naming Valerie Plame as a CIA agent. Miller served 85 days in jail.

He also mentioned San Francisco Chronicle reporters Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams, who faced jail time for not revealing to a federal grand jury their sources in reporting on steroid use in professional sports.

Pence said a free and independent press is the only check on government power in real time.

“Without the free flow of information from sources to reporters, the public is illequipped to make informed decisions,” Pence said.